The Kala *todu*, the only central drainage in the town, was also maintained in a bad condition. The necessity for improving the canal had been set out in the Council's letter No. 158/18, dated the 9th October 1926, addressed to the Government. The work should be taken up at an early date.

The drainage on the west of the local Catholic church had all the defects of the Kala *todu*. It was both marshy and shallow and should be repaired and maintained properly.

Lastly, the member spoke about the need for representation of Municipalities on the Legislative Council. Municipalities were the chief parts of the taluks and as such had better claims for representation than the taluks themselves. Municipal Councils paved the way for local self-government and everything connected with Municipal administration was entitled to have as much claim on the Legislative Council as rural administration. A Municipal representative on the Legislative Council would be of greater help in solving difficult problems of Municipal administration than individual opinions from each Municipality. Further, the policy of the Government seemed to be to hand over public roads, schools, etc., to Municipal Councils. Such a policy of decentralisation would gradually develop itself and in course of time would replace the present administration by a central government. One member of the Legislative Council should be a representative of the Municipalities.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Venkitesvara Aiyar, you deprecate the interference by the Government in the Municipal administration, by which, I presume, you mean that the Government should not keep as close a hand as they do at present upon the affairs of your Municipality. Strangely enough, several other speakers in this Assembly have been clamouring for further Government interference. They want the Government to do this, to do that, to do the other, and undertake duties the municipalities are called upon to undertake. It puzzles me how to reconcile these divergent views. In your case, the complaint seems to be mainly that the Government scrutinize your budget and make modifications in it. That is necessary because experience shows that unpractised hands too often, alas, concoct what is supposed to be a budget in certain municipalities. Fortunately for municipalities, a paternal Central Government utilise the services of their financial experts to correct errors and defects in municipal budgets. This is all done with the best intentions in the world and all done for the good of the municipalities. If sometimes the Government withholds sanction to an additional allotment outside the budget, that is only because the Government in their wisdom or in their belief in their own wisdom, prevent the municipalities from spending money in directions in which the Government do not consider it necessary. To what extent exactly the Government should guide municipalities and assist them, depends entirely on each individual municipality. I can point to one or two municipalities in Travancore where very little of Government's steadying influence is necessary; other municipalties I can point to again, in which Government have seriously debated the question of suspending the municipalities altogether and taking over the whole of the administration into their own hands. I hasten to say that Parur is not one such.

As regards better maintenance of roads and drains within the municipal limits, I quite agree with you that it is necessary to maintain them better and I hope that the municipality will hasten to do so.

The Cutcherry *todu* and Kala *todu* questions will also be considered.

Then we come to the one important problem, whether municipalities should be jointly or severally represented on the Legislative Council. Till the present Council works out the term of its natural life, I do not like to interfere with its constitution.

151. Municipal Reforms.

MR. K. N. JANARDANAN PILLAI (*Member, Municipal Council, Quilon*) urged the need for an annual All-Travancore Municipal Conference to be held under the auspices of the Government with chosen representatives from each Municipal

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Council, to collect and co-ordinate the view points of the several Councils and communicate them to the Government for speedy action. Secondly, a Superintendent of Municipalities competent to give the Councils expert advice and, among other duties, effectively to control Municipal finances, should be appointed.

It would be a mistake to imagine that local self-government in Municipal areas was full or faultless. With the delegation of powers to the Municipal Councils, the Government were relieved of a vast responsibility. But the Municipal Regulation, the sole guiding light for the Councils, was defective in its practical working. The Councils were, to some extent, groping in the dark, striving to get wise by experience, to improve the bye-laws of the defunct Town Improvement Committees or to remedy the flaws of the Municipal Regulation by passing bye-laws of their own as occasion required. The rules of the Town Improvement Committees were obsolete and apocryphal. Yet, in the absence of anything better, they were being followed. The Municipal Regulation itself was old and conditions had changed since its promulgation and its provisions were felt to be inadequate in some cases. Although the Government had promised to promulgate rules under the important sections of the Regulation, the promise had not yet been fulfilled and the Councils were consequently handicapped in their administration. It was therefore an imperative need to frame rules under sections 19, 27 and 254 (1) (*b*) and 2 (*e*), (*f*), (*g*) and (*i*) to (*r*) with the least possible delay. Although the Councils had the power to frame bye-laws, they were too slow to make attempts in that direction. Further, the rules so passed by the various Councils would be far from being uniform. The proposed Conference would be able to thresh out the above problems, remove the shortcomings and expedite reforms. The delegates could compare notes and the backward Councils could be brought into line with the progressive ones. The conference would also give the Government an opportunity for focussing their attention to the wants and wishes of a large number of urban inhabitants subject to a variety of taxes. The reason for suggesting the holding of the conference under Government auspices was that non-official agency had failed to function in the past.

As regards the Superintendent of Municipalities, he should be an expert in Municipal matters and serve as a connecting link between the Government and the Municipal Councils advising the latter and effecting the necessary corrections as occasion demanded with the authority of an expert and as the accredited agent of the Government. The local officers had failed to look after the interests of the Municipalities. As instances in point, the member said that nobody suggested the idea of raising the level of the lowlands of Alleppey with the earth excavated from the Alleppey-Shertallai canal in view to prevent stagnation of water there. Similarly, no objection was raised to the sale by the Revenue Department of a few hilly tracts which were big reserves of sand in the centre of the Quilon town. The hills could be utilised for a variety of sanitary purposes and reform schemes of the Quilon Municipality. Such schemes could since not be inaugurated because the hills could be acquired only at prohibitive costs. Again, a plot of ground near the Kurisummuttu landing in Quilon was acquired during the regime of Dewan, Dewan Bahadur Mr. Krishnan Nair for building purposes. The scheme did not thrive and the plot of ground passed into private hands. There was no convenient jetty at Quilon for cargo boats. The plot of ground in question was being used by merchants on payment of money to the owner. If there were a Superintendent of Municipalities, he would have seen the utility of the plot for affording landing facilities for cargo boats and would not have allowed it to go into private hands.

Delay in remittance of dues, falsification of accounts and defalcations of money were rife in Municipalities. The annual inspection by the Account Officer was not effective enough to detect the mischiefs perpetrated by the Municipal subordinates because the advent of the auditors for inspection was announced beforehand. Surprise visits and vigilant and relentless scrutiny alone would stop dishonest practices. Without disparagement to any one, it might be stated that non-official presidents unaided by experts, were not equal to efficient audit work. In support, the member referred to the malpractices committed in the Attingal and Quilon Municipal Councils. A Superintendent of Municipalities in touch with all Municipal Councils and with a

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head for administration and armed with enough power would be a thorn by the side of delinquents whose evil propensities would be nipped in the bud. The proposed appointment should therefore be sanctioned. The member claimed that, in suggesting the above appointment, he was voicing forth the opinion of all the Municipal Councils

DEWAN'S REPLY : Mr. Janardanan Pillai, some curious prank of nature has placed your speech in close juxta-position with that of your predecessor. I cannot imagine municipal affairs viewed from more divergent points of view. For, the propositions each of you enunciated are as antithetical as they might well be. I won't say with whom my sympathy lies. That will be showing partiality. I leave it to you to guess. But this much seems to be clear that if we did have an Inspector or a Superintendent or a *liaison* officer, I say, *if* you had such a Co-ordinating Inspector as you ask for acting with the authority of an expert or with the prestige of a Government officer, I am quite sure that two such divergent speeches in respect of municipalities would not have been presented by two members of different municipalities; he will cast you both into the same mould. Therefore I say I am not very much in favour of an Inspector or Superintendent who will make all municipalities exactly the same. I, for one, am a strong advocate of individuality in human institutions as in human beings. I would like to see each municipality work out its career on individual and original lines according to its own requirements and the conditions by which it is surrounded. At the same time I quite agree with you that an annual assemblage of members of municipalities or the representatives of municipalities may be of valuable help to the general body of Municipal councillors in Travancore. But, I think, to be full and free and entirely disingenuous in their deliberations, such a conference is best if it is free from the incubus of Government control. I shall be very glad to see the gentlemen of the municipalities meet and exchange views, but do not let it be under the hand and under the eye of the Government. At any rate as an experiment I should like you to try it.

As regards the rules under various sections of the Municipal Regulation, I gather that you advocate the making of rules for closer control and guidance. Upon that point I expressed myself, not to the last speaker, but to one who preceded him a little while ago. I said that the Government's hand in respect of the municipalities should only appear when something goes wrong ; otherwise the Government should stay their hands.

MEMBER : Even in the Regulation it is said that rules will be framed.

DEWAN : I do not know whether it is that the rules shall be framed or may be framed. I will have that point looked up.

152. Supervision of Municipalities.

MR. MATHU MATTHEW (*Member, Trading Classes, Kottayam*) emphasized the need for the appointment of a Superintendent of Municipalities. He said that the administration of Municipalities and the nature of control exercised over them by the Government were not satisfactory. The same matter was pressed at the previous session of the Assembly and the Government thereupon referred the same to the several Municipal Presidents who, however, did not support the proposal. The Presidents of the Municipal Councils were mainly responsible for the existing defects in Municipal administration. Under Section 30(1) of the Municipal Regulation, when a resolution was passed by any Council against the opinion of the President, the latter had the power to recommend to the Government the vetoing of the resolution and, pending orders of the Government, to keep the resolution in abeyance without bringing it into effect. Such powers led to unpleasant situations in certain Municipal Councils. It was therefore surprising that the Government accepted the views of the Presidents as regards the proposed appointment of a superintending officer. Municipal Councils were the training ground for practising local self-government.

In view to check excesses and administer timely corrections to the Councils and inform the Government of the defects in the working of these Councils a separate officer was absolutely necessary. Due to the absence of such an officer, the Government were not informed in time of the defects in the working of the Councils. The resolutions passed in the Councils were sent up to the Government for publication in the *Government Gazette* six or seven months after they were passed.

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